

THE
FOUNDATION
OF
MORAL GOODNESS:
Or a further
INQUIRY
INTO THE
ORIGINAL
OF OUR
IDEA of VIRTUE.

By a CLERGYMAN.

*Est quidem vera lex, recta ratio naturæ congruens,
diffusa in omnes, constans, sempiterna.* —

CICERO.

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THE ingenious Author of *the Enquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*, has written both his Books with so good a Design, is every where so instructive or entertaining, and discovers upon all Occasions such a Fund of good Nature, as well as good Sense, that I find my self much more inclined to join with the Publick in his just Praise, than offer any Objections against his Performance. And indeed it is not without Pain, that I attempt to point out some particulars, wherein I apprehend he has erred. I should scarce content my self with the old Excuse of *magis amica Veritas*, if the Mistakes which I

think he has committed, did not appear to be of the utmost Consequence; if they did not lie at the Foundations of Morality, and like Failures in Ground-Work, affect the whole Building. — To enquire what it is that originally constitutes *Virtue* or *Moral Goodness*, and whence arises that universal *Approbation* which it meets with from rational Beings, are undoubtedly Speculations of very great Moment: It may be justly questioned whether any more important can enter into the Mind of Man. The deeper we search into the Nature of Virtue, if we search with Success, the more excellent and more amiable we shall find it. We should therefore consider this Matter with our utmost Attention, and carefully examine such Questions as may arise concerning it. Our Author is so sensible of this, that I am confident it will give him no Disturbance, to find any of his Sentiments on this Subject examined, or even opposed, provided it be done seriously, and with that Decency and Moderation of which he has set so good an Example.

Among the several Notions of Morality which have been advanced, our Author observes * that *there are two Opinions entirely opposite, — both intelligible, each consistent with it self. That the one seems not to represent human Nature as it is, and that the other seems to do it. — The former of these Opinions is, that all Actions flow from the Prospect of private Happiness, of some Kind*

* *Illustrations*, P. 207, 211.

or other, as the sole Motive of Election. That in like manner, what determines any Agent to approve his own Action, is its Tendency to his private Happiness. And that the Approbation of the Action of another, is from an Opinion of its Tendency to the Happiness of the Approver, either immediately or more remotely.

This Scheme our Author with great Reason rejects, as dishonourable to human Nature, and injurious to the Cause of Virtue. He justly observes, that it can never account for the principal Actions of human Life; such as the Offices of Friendship, Gratitude, natural Affection, Generosity, publick Spirit, Compassion. And tho' I cannot so far agree with him, as to conclude that no Actions can be morally good, which are solely directed to private Interest; yet I think it very evident that such a Supposition is utterly inconsistent with social Virtue, as he has clearly and incontestably proved.

And this is in part the other Opinion which he lays down in Opposition to the former. He represents it thus, in one of the Pages referred to before, viz. *That we have not only Self-Love, but benevolent Affections also towards others in various Degrees, making us desire their Happiness as an ultimate End, without any View to private Happiness. That we have a moral Sense, or Determination of our Mind, to approve every kind of Affection either in our selves or others; and all publickly useful Actions, which we imagine do flow from such Affection, without our having a View to our private Happiness in our Approba-*
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tion of these Actions. — In order to apprehend rightly our Author's Scheme, it will be necessary to compare this Passage with what he has laid down elsewhere. * *Every Action*, says he, *which we apprehend as morally good or evil, is always supposed to flow from some Affection towards* † *Rational Agents.* And whatever we call *Virtue or Vice*, is either some such *Affection*, or some *Action consequent upon it.* He tells us in ‡ another Place, that the *true Spring of Virtue* is some *Determination of our Nature to study the Good of others, or some Instinct* — which influences us to the *Love of others*, as the *moral Sense* determines us to approve the *Actions which flow from this Love in our selves or others.*

Having given an Account of these two opposite Opinions, he proceeds to take Notice of other different Ideas of Virtue, as I conceive them to be; tho' he considers them only as ** other Ways of speaking, which seems to signify something different. What these *Ways of speaking* are, and whether they signify something really, or only seemingly different, will appear afterwards. In the mean Time I beg leave to consider our Author's Scheme, which according to the Light wherein it appears to me, I can by no Means approve.

That the Author of Nature has planted in

* Vol. I. Page 136.

† Tho' only Rational Agents are here mentioned, yet it was not his Intention to exclude other sensitive Natures, as appears from his Explanations elsewhere.

‡ Vol. I. p. 155.

** Vol. II. p. 211.

our Minds *benevolent Affections towards others*, cannot be denied without contradicting Experience, and falsifying our own Perceptions. Whoever carefully reflects on what passes within his own Breast, may soon be convinced of this Truth, and even feel the Evidences of it. Nor can it be doubted but these *Affections* were given us in order to engage, assist and quicken us in a Course of virtuous Actions. They may be looked upon as Auxiliaries, aiding us in our Duty, and supporting and seconding our Reason and Reflection.——But from the Passages I have produced, and others of the like Nature, it plainly appears that our Author does not consider this *natural Affection* or *Instinct*, merely as a Help or Incentive to Virtue, but as the true Ground and Foundation of it. He makes Virtue entirely to consist in it, or flow from it.

I must confess my self prejudiced, in some Measure, against this Notion, and cannot forbear expressing my Hopes that it will not prove to be just. If the two *Instincts* of *Affection* and *moral Sense* be the only Pillars on which moral Goodness rests, how secure it may stand I know not, but am afraid its Honour, its Dignity, its Beauty will suffer in the Eyes of a great Part of the rational World. I am as unwilling, as our Author can be, that *Virtue should be looked upon as wholly artificial*. Let it by all means be represented as *Natural* to us; let it take its Rise, and flow unalterably from the Nature of Men and Things, and then it will appear not only *natural* but *necessary*. I mean necessary in itself, tho' not
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in respect of its Votaries, as being the Object of their free Choice. — Let it be allowed that Virtue has a natural Right and Authority, antecedently to every *Instinct*, and every *Affection*, to prescribe Laws to all moral Agents, and let no Bounds be set to its Dominions. More particularly let it reign without a Rival in every human Mind; but let its Throne be erected in the highest * Part of our Nature; let Truth and right Reason be its immediate Supporters; and let our several Senses, Instincts, Affections and Interests, attend as ministerial and subservient to its sacred Purposes. — But instead of representing this Matter to my Readers Imaginations, my Business is to appeal to their Understandings. And in the

First Place, it seems an insuperable Difficulty in our Author's Scheme, that Virtue appears in it to be of an arbitrary and positive Nature, as entirely depending upon *Instincts*, that might originally have been otherwise, or even contrary to what they now are, and may at any Time be alter'd or inverted, if the Creator pleases. If our Affections constitute the *Honestum* of Morality, and do not presuppose it, it is natural to ask, What it was that determined the Deity to plant in us these Affections rather than any other? This our Author answers by supposing a certain † *Disposition essential to the Deity corresponding to the Affections he has given us*. As he also supposes something *analogous* in the Deity to our moral

* *Virtus, ut omnes fatemur, altissimum locum in homine, & maximè excellentem tenet.* Cic. de Fin. Lib. IV.

† *Illustrations*, Page 239. and elsewhere.

Sense. By such a *Disposition* he imagines the Deity would naturally be inclined to give us the *kind Affections* in Preference to any other. I ask then further, Is such a *Disposition* a Perfection in the Deity, or is it not? Is it better than a contrary, or than any other Disposition would have been, more worthy of his Nature, and more agreeable to his other Perfections? If it be not, let us not presume to ascribe it to him. Whatever is in the Deity must be absolutely good, and *sui generis* the very best. On the other Hand, if this Disposition be absolutely good, and really better than any other, then the Question will be, why, and upon what Account it is so? Whatever shall be assigned as the Ground or Reason of that Goodness or Betterness, that we may securely pitch upon, as a proper Foundation for Virtue. If no Reason can be given why the Deity should be *benevolently disposed*, and yet we suppose him to be so; will it not follow, that he is influenced and acted by a blind unaccountable Impulse? — In Matters perfectly indifferent, it is needless and absurd to have recourse to Mr. *Leibnitz's Principle of a sufficient Reason*; and where several Means equally conduce to a proposed End, it is certainly indifferent which of them are chosen: But it can never be thought an indifferent Matter how the Deity is *disposed* or *affected* towards his Creatures. Either therefore it must be concluded, that he is determined by the Reason of the Thing, and that this is the Ground of his Benevolence, or else it must be said, that such a Disposition is *ne-*

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cessary in the Deity; if the latter, I ask, In what Sense is it necessary? A *moral Necessity* is manifestly nothing to the Purpose; and if a *Physical* or natural *Necessity* be meant, that is utterly inconsistent with our Ideas of Goodness. As far as any Acts of Kindness are unchosen and unavoidable, so far they are no Kindness at all, neither infer they any Obligation. But of this more afterwards.

Our Author, in his *Enquiry into the original Idea of Virtue*, has made the following Observation, * *That our first Ideas of moral Good depend not on Laws, may plainly appear from our constant Enquiries into the Justice of Laws themselves; and that not only of human Laws, but also of the Divine. What else can be the Meaning of that universal Opinion, that the Laws of God are just, and holy, and good?* Very right. But I wonder much this Sentiment should not have led the Author to the true original Idea of moral Goodness. For after we have made such Enquiries, do we find Reason to conclude that any *Laws* are good, merely from their being conformable to the *Affections* of the Legislator? And in respect of the divine Laws, what is it that convinces us that they are *just*, and *holy*, and *good*? Is it their Conformity to a certain *Disposition* which we suppose in the Deity. On the contrary, is it not a Perception of the intrinsic Reasonableness of them, and their

Tendency to 'public Good? If we impartially consult our Ideas, I am persuaded we shall find that moral Goodness no more depends originally on *Affections* and *Dispositions*, than it does on *Laws*; and that there is something in Actions, absolutely good, antecedent to both.

2. Another Objection to our Author's Account of moral Good, is, that according thereto, if God had not framed our Natures with such a Propensity, and given us this benevolent Instinct, we should have been altogether incapable of Virtue; and notwithstanding Intelligence, Reason, and Liberty, it would have been out of our Power to perform one Action in any Degree morally good. It is evident that this is a direct Consequence of his Notion; and how a Notion should be true, that labours under such a Consequence as this, I cannot understand. Let it be supposed, that we had been formed destitute of *natural Affection*; and more particularly, that we found in our Hearts no kind Instinct towards our Benefactors: Would *Gratitude*, upon this Supposition, have been absolutely out of our Power? Might we not nevertheless, by the Help of Reason and Reflection, discover ourselves to be under Obligations, and that we ought to return good Offices or Thanks, according to our Abilities? If we did not, certainly it would be, owing to great Inadvertency, and Absence of Thought. — Or, supposing us void of *natural Compassion*, as well as *Benevolence*; might we not possibly be induced to attempt the Relief of a Person in Distress, merely from the *Reason* of

the Thing, and the *Rectitude* of the Action? Might we not by considering the Nature of the Case, and the Circumstances of the Sufferer, perceive some Fitness, some Reasonableness in an Act of Succour? Might not some such Maxim as that of doing as we would be done unto, offer it self to our Minds, and prevail with us to stretch out a helping Hand upon such an Occasion? In short, if we made any Use of our Understandings, they would not fail, I think, to discover our Duty in such a Case. Nay, they would prompt us to undertake it, and condemn us if we omitted it. He who now declines such an Office, incurs the Imputation of Inhumanity and Cruelty. And even upon the Supposition I am speaking of, who would scruple to pronounce him unreasonable and unjust? Considering the Frailties and Thoughtlessness of Mankind, it is but too manifest that we stand in need of Instincts and Inclinations to prompt us to what is good, and stimulate us to our Duty: and good Reason there was, why we should not be trusted to ourselves, and the Dictates of our Reason, without them. But still such Virtues would surely have been practicable, tho' they might have been more rarely practised. — Whoever is led by instinct to the Performance of a good Action, follows the Bias of his Nature. What shall we say then of him who performs the same Action in obedience to the Reason of his own Mind? Is it not as *natural* for a *reasonable* Creature to act *reasonably*, as for an *affectionate* one to act *affectionately*? It should be more so; because

because though both Principles are natural, yet the former is greatly superior, as being of a nobler and sublimer kind. To represent a rational Agent as incapable of performing or approving Actions morally good, without presupposing certain Instincts, seems to me inverting the Frame of our Nature, and transferring the Supremacy from the highest Principle to the lowest.

3. Another Difficulty in our Author's Scheme is, that it seems to expose him to the Necessity of allowing some Degree of Virtue to *Brutes*, when in describing a moral Action, he directs and confines our Affections to *rational* Objects. This Limitation, as I before took Notice, appears to have been only casual, for as much as in other Places, he takes in all *sensitive* Beings. And indeed, there is no Reason to doubt, but Brutes, as they are capable of being treated by us either mercifully or cruelly, may be the *Objects* either of Virtue or Vice. But the present Question is, whether, according to our Author's Account of moral Good, they are not also in some Measure *Subjects* of Virtue? For if Virtue be only kind *Instincts*, or *Affections*, or *Actions consequent upon them*, how shall we be able to disprove or deny the Virtue of Brutes? They pursue the Instincts and Impulses of Nature, more steadily and regularly than Men; they shew * Affection to their respective Kinds, and a strong Degree of Love

* *Quod si hoc apparet in bestiis, primum ut se diligant ipsæ, deinde ut requirant atque appetant, ad quas se applicent, ejusdem generis animantes: idque faciunt cum desiderio, & cum quadam similitudine amoris humani. Cic. de Amicit.*

and Tenderneſs towards their Offspring. And if a Perception, or a Conſciouſneſs of the Reaſonableneſs of Actions, be not required to conſtitute thoſe Actions virtuous, what is there wanting to render many of theirs truly ſuch?—If it be alledged that they know not what they do, and that they are neither capable of intending Good, nor ſenſible of any Effects of their Love: my Answer is, that they have kind Affections and ſuitable Actions; which is our Author's Idea of Virtue: Beſides, I cannot allow all thoſe Suppoſitions to paſs for Facts, till ſome Proof appear. In the mean while, it ſeems to me that theſe Creatures Incapacity for Morals, is to be aſcribed chiefly, and perhaps wholly, to their utter Ignorance of the Reaſons and Relations of Things; from whence it may juſtly be concluded, that whatever Ideas they may have of *natural* Good, they can have none of *moral*.

4. Another Argument againſt our Author's Origine of Virtue, is, that if Virtue conſiſt in kind Affections, then the ſtronger thoſe Affections, the greater the Virtue. I preſume this Conſequence is very clear, and yet, if I miſtake not, it is both contrary to Fact, and to our Author's own Declarations. He tells us * that *in equal Moments of Good produced by two Agents, when one acts from a general Benevolence, the other from a nearer Tie, there is greater Virtue in the Agent who produces greater Good from the weaker Attachment.*—Thus in cooperating with

* Vol. I. P. 292.

Gratitude, natural Affection or Friendship, we evidence less Virtue in any given Moment of Good produced, than in equally important Actions of general Benevolence. From hence I think it follows, that if *equal Good* were supposed to be *produced by an Agent*, without any Affection or Attachment at all, his *Virtue* would still be *greater* in the same Proportion. How then should that be the true Ground or Principle of Virtue, by the total Absence of which Virtue is mightily encreased, and which lessens it, when present, in Proportion to the Degree of its own Strength and Influence? How to reconcile the foregoing Passage with the Author's Idea of Virtue, I must confess myself at a Loss.—However, the Passage seems to me to contain nothing but what is evidently true. An Act of Kindness done to a *Child* or a dear *Friend*, is certainly less Virtue than doing the same to a *Stranger*. And what can be the Reason of it? Are not the Actions equally reasonable? Or rather, is not the former more reasonable than the latter? Why then less virtuous? Because the Impulse is so strong as to supersede Reflection, and over-rule in a great Measure the Freedom of Choice. To be determined to the doing a good Action merely by the Reason and Right of the Thing, is genuine Goodness; this is the purest and most perfect Virtue of which any Agent is capable. As far as we are influenced by Instincts and Affections, so much is to be discounted in the Estimate of our Beneficence; as I shall soon have further Occasion to observe. On the other hand, the stronger the Instinct,

stinct, the more vicious is the Violation of it, as our Author takes Notice. A barbarous Action committed against a Child or a Friend, is vastly more criminal than against a Stranger; as in this Case a Man breaks through much stronger Tyes and Obligations, and shamefully counteracts both Reason and Affection in their utmost Force.

But to proceed; Let us hear what Reason our Author gives for those *Actions appearing less amiable, which flow from the nearer Attachments of Nature*. He tells us † the Reason is plainly this, *These strong Instincts are by Nature limited to small Numbers of Mankind*.—As I do not apprehend this to be the right Reason, so neither do I think it affords any Solution of the forementioned Difficulty; for however a general Affection may be preferable to a limited and partial one, yet certainly, according to our Author's Scheme, the Degree of an Agent's Virtue must depend upon the *Strength* of his Affections, as well as the *Extent* and Diffusiveness of them. If Virtue consists only in Affection and the Effects it produces, this Consequence is unavoidable.—Supposing then that Men had the same *natural Affection* for their whole *Species*, that they have now for their *Offspring*, I ask, whether would this *encrease* or *diminish* the Virtue and Merit of their good Offices? If it be said, that it would *diminish* the Virtue of them, how is that to be reconciled with our Author's Opinion, who derives all Virtue from Affection, and makes it entirely consist in

† Vol. I. Page 181.

it? If it be said that it would *encrease* it, how is that consistent either with the fore-cited Passages or the Truth of the Case? Not with those Passages, because Actions are there represented as *less virtuous*, when flowing from *near Attachments* or strong Affections: Not with the Truth of the Case, because upon this Supposition, universal Kindness would be almost unavoidable, while little or no room was left for the Influence of Reason. — And this I take to be the true Cause why parental Kindness is less meritorious and less virtuous than other Species of Benevolence; for in this Case, the Instincts and Impulses of Nature are generally so strong as to lay a kind of a Constraint upon Parents, and engage them almost irresistably in a Series of good Offices. Their Virtue therefore is diminished in Proportion to the Strength of this natural Bias, and the Weight that is laid upon their Wills; and so it would be in Respect of *general Benevolence*, upon the foregoing Supposition. On the contrary, supposing the *sophy*, or *natural Affection* suspended, or taken off, the Virtue of those Parents, who nevertheless discharged their Duty, would be exceedingly encreased.—However; we cannot but acknowledge and admire the Wisdom and Goodness of the Creator, in not trusting to the Reflection of frail Man for the Performance of so necessary a Duty. It is much better that the Balance of natural Affection be too strong, as we commonly find it is, than that helpless Infants should be committed to the Care of *unaffectionate* Parents.

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But to return; In order to be satisfied of the Truth of the foregoing Observation, let us imagine the Head of some numerous Family, large enough for a little Colony, carrying them away with him into some remote and desolate Island, and there forming a petty Principality; his Care in enacting good Laws, and executing them faithfully and prudently, his indefatigable Endeavours to promote the Welfare of his Descendants, and his governing them with all the Mildness, Gentleness and Clemency, that were consistent with an orderly Administration, would doubtless be laudable and virtuous. — But let us imagine another Legislature, presiding over an equal Number of People, where there was no such *near Attachments* of Nature, no Tye of Consanguinity, and yet ruling with equal Care, Prudence, Gentleness, and Moderation; whether of these Characters would appear more amiable and deserving? Whether should we more approve and admire? In the former Case, a great Share of the Merit would be placed to the Account of *natural Affection*, commonly so called. In the latter, excepting the *weaker Attachment* of common *Humanity*, we discover nothing but pure Virtue, and a Sense of Honour and Duty; for as to external Motives, I suppose them equal in both Cases. — And if instead of small Governments, large and populous Kingdoms could have been supposed thus circumstantiated, the different Merit of the Legislators would still have appeared in the same Light. From whence we may justly conclude, that the true Reason why *parental* or any other *Benevolence*

lence, that flows from the *near Attachments* of Nature, appear less amiable and virtuous, is not *its being limited to small numbers of Mankind*, as our Author has represented it. What appears to me the just and right Way of accounting for it has been already observed, and need not here be repeated?

5. *Lastly*, It may deserve to be considered (though I have touched upon it already) how much Virtue is depreciated and dishonoured by so ignoble an Original. In our Author's Scheme it is resolved ultimately into mere *Instinct*, and made to consist in it; and even that universal Approbation which it meets with from intelligent Creatures, is ascribed to a certain *Sense*, and made to depend wholly on it. Now if *Virtue* and the *Approbation* of Virtue, be merely *instinctive*, we must certainly think less highly and less honourably of it, than we should do if we looked upon it as *rational*; for I suppose it will readily be allowed, that *Reason* is the nobler Principle: it is therefore to be wished that it may be found to have the first and chief Place in the *original Idea of Virtue*, and the Exclusion of it must, I think, be a Disparagement to both. — Some will not allow, our Author † tells us, *any Merit in Actions flowing from kind Instincts, the Operation of which, they say, is not voluntary but necessary*. Has our Author any where denied their operating in this Manner? Or has he attempted to shew that they may produce meri-

* *Illustrat.* Sect, 5.

torious Actions, notwithstanding such a Manner of Operation? I cannot find that he has done either; and indeed it seems utterly impossible to reconcile *Virtue* with any kind of *Necessity*. As far as any Actions spring from a necessary Principle, so far they must be, in a moral Sense, worthless. If it be said that Instincts do not *force* the Mind, but only *incline* it, I answer, that as much Room as they leave for the Use of Liberty and the Exercise of Reason, so much Room they leave for Virtue; but then this Virtue consists in a *rational Determination*, and not in a blind Pursuit of the *Instinct*. What he objects to this will be considered in its proper Place, in the mean time, to his Query concerning the Meaning of the Words *Merit* or *Praise-worthiness*; I answer, that *they denote the Quality in Actions which not only gains the Approbation of the Observer, but which also deserves or is worthy of it**. *Approbation* does not constitute *Merit*, but is produced by it; is not the Cause of it, but the Effect. An Agent might be meritorious, though it were in the Power of all other Beings to withhold their Approbation; he might deserve their Praise, tho' we supposed him at the same Time under an universal Censure. Notwithstanding all that our Author has alledged in Behalf of *Instincts*, I think it appears, even from what has been already said, that they are so far from constituting *Virtue* or moral Goodness, that, other Things being equal,

* *Etiam si à nullo laudetur, natura esse laudabile.* Cic. de Off. L. I.

we always account those Actions most virtuous which have the least Dependence upon Instincts; and though in some Sense we approve of those Actions which flow from Instincts, yet there are others which we approve much more, as flowing from a superior Principle, and meriting our Approbation in themselves, and upon their own Account.

I shall now proceed to consider the other of the two Instincts which our Author has offered for the Support of Morality, viz. the *moral Sense*, the Object of which seems to me not sufficiently specified. — *Virtue*, or moral Goodness, may be considered either under the Notion of † *Pulchrum* or *Honestum*. As to the *Pulchrum* or *Beauty* of *Virtue*, it seems to me somewhat doubtful and difficult to determine, whether the *Understanding* alone be sufficient for the Perception of it, or whether it be not necessary to suppose some distinct Power superadded for that Purpose. It should seem indeed, as an ingenious Writer has observed ‡, that our Faculty of Understanding is of itself sufficient for such a Perception, that the *Beauty* of *Virtue* inseparably and necessarily adheres to the *Ideas* themselves, which *whenever presented to the Mind, appear invariably the same*, always amiable and always beautiful. But when I consider, what perhaps is the Case in fact, that Perceptions of the *Pulchrum* and of the *Honestum*, seem not equally universal, or if universal,

† *Hoc decorum quidem est totum cum virtute confusum, sed mente & cogitatione distinguitur.* Cic. *ibid.*

‡ *Letter in the London Journal, Numb. 450.*

yet in very different Degrees; that while every rational Creature clearly and uniformly perceives, in all ordinary Cases, what is *fit*, and *just*, and *right*; many Men have little or no Perception of that *Beauty* in Actions, with which others are wonderfully charmed: And when I further consider, that some Actions appear to all Men more *beautiful* than others, though equally *right* and *fit*; as in the Case of *Social* and *Self-Duties*; I find myself obliged to suspend, and to wait for further Evidence. — Especially in respect of the *Pleasure* resulting from such Perceptions. For however *Ideas*, *beautiful* in themselves, may be *seen* by the Understanding; yet *Pleasure* is not *seen*, but *felt*; and therefore seems to be an Object of some other Faculty than that which we are used to consider as merely *visive*. If the purest Pleasures be *Sensations*, of some kind or other; the Mind in receiving them, must be looked upon, not as *intelligent*, but *sensible*. And indeed, *Sensibility* seems to be as distinct from the *Understanding*, as the *Understanding* is from the *Will*. We should not therefore confound them in our Conceptions.

But this is a Speculation somewhat foreign to my present purpose. It was not the *Beauty* of *Virtue*, or the *Pleasure* arising from the Perception of it, that I proposed to enquire into. My Intention was only to consider the Nature, and search for the Origine of *Moral Rectitude*. For the Perception of this, I presume it will appear, that the Faculty of Understanding is altogether sufficient, without the Intervention of our

Author's

Author's *Moral Sense*. But before I enter into that Matter, it may be proper to consider, how improbable it is, that our Perceptions of *Right* and *Wrong*, and the *Approbation* or *Disapprobation* consequent thereupon, should depend on such a *Sense*, or *Instinct*, as he has advanced for that purpose. And here I shall only need to observe, that this Opinion is liable to the very same Objections, and labours under the same Difficulties with the former. — Thus, as deriving *Virtue* merely from natural *Affection*, implies it to be of an arbitrary and changeable Nature; our judging and approving of it by a *Moral Sense* implies the same: Forasmuch as this *Sense*, as well as that *Affection*, might possibly have been quite contray to what it is at present; or may be altered at any Time hereafter. Accordingly our Author grants *, *There is nothing in this surpassing the natural Power of the Deity*. But I humbly apprehend he is mistaken; and that it is no more in the Power of the Deity to make rational Beings *approve of Ingratitude, Perfidiousness, &c.* than it is in his Power to make them conclude, *that a Part of any thing is equal to the Whole*. — In like manner, as according to our Author's Scheme, we should have been utterly incapable of *Virtue* without *Natural Affection*; so without a *Moral Sense*, we could never have *approved* of it; nor ever have had any Idea at all of Moral Goodness; so that in this respect, our Understandings would have been en-

* Vol. I. Page 302, and elsewhere.

tirely useless. As if intelligent Creatures could not, as such, perceive the most obvious Relations, and judge of a plain *Action*, as well as a plain *Truth*! — Again, as it seems to follow from our Author's Idea of Virtue, that Brutes may be in some Degree capable of practising it; so upon the same Supposition of a *moral Sense*, why may they not, in some Measure, *approve* of such a Practice? It is not to be doubted but they are sensible of Pleasure, in the Exercise of their natural Affections. Supposing them then endued with a *moral Sense*, or something corresponding thereto, why might they not see with Complacency others of their own Species exercising and exerting the same Affections? And indeed, if the Reasons and Relations of Things are out of the Question, and this *moral Sense* means no more than a natural Determination to receive agreeable or disagreeable Ideas of certain Actions; I think it will be very difficult to prove Brutes incapable of such a Sense.—Thus again, as I think it follows from our Author's Notion, that the stronger Men's *Affections* are, the greater must be their *Virtue*; so it may be concluded, that the stronger and quicker their *moral Sense* is, the higher must their *Approbation* of virtuous Actions rise. Let the Perceptions of *Beauty*, and the *Pleasure* which attends them, be supposed as different and various as the Author thinks fit. But to make the *Rectitude* of moral Actions dependant upon *Instinct*, and in Proportion to the Warmth and Strength of the *moral Sense*, rise and fall like Spirits in a Thermometer,

mometer, is depreciating the most sacred Thing
 in the World, and almost exposing it to Ridicule.
 I believe no Man living is further from such an
 Intention than our Author. But I am obliged
 to examine his Opinion, as if it was not his.
 If what I have now observed be not a real Con-
 sequence from it, I must be answerable for the
 Mistake. But if it be, as I presume it is, it seems
 heavy enough to sink any Opinion in the World.
 It might as well be said, that eternal and ne-
 cessary Truths may be altered and diversified,
 encreased or lessened by the Difference of Men's
 Understandings; as that Virtue or moral Rec-
 titude should be capable of such a Variation.
 It can receive no Change, no Alteration any
 way, much less in Consequence of a *Sense*, or
 an *Instinct*. — Lastly, as I took Notice how
 Virtue was dishonoured by so ignoble an Ori-
 ginal as that of Instinct, so the same Observation
 may be applied to the Notion of a *moral Sense*,
 with this Addition; that at the same Time that
 it depreciates Virtue, it also debases the Faculty
 of Reason: The former it does by ascribing to
 a blind Impulse that Approbation which Virtue
 eternally claims in his own Right; the latter by
 representing our Understandings as incapable, and
 as insufficient of themselves, to judge and ap-
 prove of it. And what can be more disparag-
 ing to Reason, than to deny it a Power of
 distinguishing, in the most ordinary Cases, be-
 tween Right and Wrong, Good and Evil? Sup-
 pose a Man deprived of what our Author calls
 the *moral Sense*; and according to his Hypothesis,

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whatever Reason and Philosophy the Man may be possess'd of, the Characters of *Antoninus* and *Caligula*, of *Socrates* and *Apicius*, shall appear to him in the same Light, and their Conduct equally praiseworthy, or rather equally indifferent: Than which I cannot easily imagine a more shocking Absurdity.

Thus I think it appears that our Author's Opinions concerning the two Instincts of *Affection* and *moral Sense*, stand equally exposed to the same Objections. From whence we may observe how nicely they are match'd, and how exactly they tally to each other. ——— Let us then seek out for some *other Original of our Ideas*, and inquire whether *Virtue* or *moral Goodness* do not stand on a surer and nobler Foundation. Perhaps we may find it independent of all *Instincts*, necessarily fixed, and immoveably rooted in the Nature of Things. And perhaps also we may find *Reason* or *Intelligence*, a proper Faculty to perceive and judge of it, without the Assistance of any adventitious Power; only let it be remembred, that it is not the *Beauty* or *Pleasure*, but only the *Rectitude* of moral Actions that we are enquiring after.

Our Author observes, as I before took notice, that *other Ways of speaking have been introduced*, which seem to signify something different from the two opposite Opinions beforementioned. And he concludes, that to render these intelligible, the *moral Sense* must be presupposed. These *Ways of speaking*, as he calls them, are,
 * *That Morality of Actions consist in Conformi-*

* *Illustrations*, P. 207, 211.

ty to Reason, and Difformity from it. That *Virtue* is acting according to the absolute *Fitness* of Things, or agreeably to the *Natures* and *Relations* of Things. That there are eternal and immutable *Differences* of Things, absolutely and antecedently; that there are also eternal and unalterable *Relations* in the *Natures* of the Things themselves; from which arise *Agreements* and *Disagreements*, *Congruities* and *Incongruities*, *Fitness* and *Unfitness* of the *Application* of *Circumstances* to the *Qualifications* of *Persons*, &c. And here the Author refers us to that excellent, that inestimable Book, Dr. S. Clarke's *Boyle's Lectures*; from which, how it happened that a Person of his Discernment and Penetration rose dissatisfied, in Relation to the Points before us, I am not able to imagine, unless I may have leave to attribute it to too close an Attachment to the celebrated Author of the *Characteristicks*.

To these Ways of speaking might be added some others; as that *Virtue* consists in the *Conformity* of our *Wills* to our *Understandings*. That it is a *rational Endeavour* of producing *Happiness* in capable *Subjects*. But since both these and the former appear to me coincident, and to center in the same Idea, I shall not examine them severally, but content myself with laying down the Notion contained in them in the following *Definitions* and *Explications*. And this Method I therefore pitch upon, because our Author has complained of the *Darkness* or *Ambiguity* of several of the *Terms*.

1. VIRTUE, or *Moral Goodness*, is the *Conformity of our Moral Actions to the Reasons of Things*. VICE the contrary.

2. MORAL ACTIONS are *such as are knowingly directed toward some Object intelligent or sensible*.

— I do not add their springing from free Choice; because without this they could not really be Actions. — To treat or use an insensible object conformably to Reason, or according to what it is, tho' it may be a *right* Action, yet is indifferent in respect of *Morality*; which only concerns our Behaviour to such Beings as are, at least, *sensible*. But as I exclude not here, Beings merely sensible, so neither do I exclude the Agent himself. To promote his own real Welfare, in subordination to that of the Public, is in its Kind true Virtue.

3. The CONFORMITY of *such Actions to REASON, or the RECTITUDE of them, is their Agreeableness to the Nature and Circumstances of the Agents and the Objects*. — A *social* Action is then *right*, when it is suitable to the Nature and Relations of the Persons concerned. Thus a Person obliged acts *rightly* and *reasonably*, when his Actions are answerable to the Relation of Gratitude between him and his Benefactor.

4. RELATIONS *between Things or Persons, are their comparative States or Modes of Existence, necessarily arising from their different Natures or Circumstances*. — Whether Relations be *Qualities inherent in external Natures*, or not; or however they may be defined, or conceived; they are certainly real, unalterable and eternal.

eternal. That is, supposing those Natures always continuing to be what they are, the Relations interceding between them are invariable. However, the Relations between *Ideas* are strictly necessary and unchangeable; the *Ideas* themselves being so in the divine Understanding.

5. OBLIGATION may be considered as either *external* or *internal*. Of *external*, which arises from just Authority, I have no Occasion to speak. — *INTERNAL OBLIGATION* is a State of the Mind into which it is brought by the Perception of a plain Reason for acting, or forbearing to act, arising from the Nature, Circumstances, or Relations of Persons or Things. — The internal Reasons of Things are the supreme * Law, inducing the strongest Obligation, and affecting † all intelligent Beings. Tho' we are certainly obliged to do whatever appears to be the Will of God, merely because it is his Will, and in consequence of that Right which He has to prescribe Laws to us; yet our Obligation to act conformably to Reason is even superior to this, because the divine Will itself is eternally subject to this original Law or Rule of Action. — To support reasonable Beings, unconcerned with the Reasons of Things, is to suppose them reasonable and unreasonable at the same Time. The

* Πᾶν τὸ βέλτιστον φαινόμενον ἔστω σοι νόμος ἀπαράβατος.

Epiſtet. Cap. 75.

Lex nihil eſt aliud niſi recta—ratio. Cic. Philip. II.

† *Æternum quiddam quod univerſum mundum regeret imperandi prohibendique ſapienſia.* Cic. de Lég. Lib. 2.

Reasons of Things are to Men, in respect of Practice, what Evidence is in Speculation. Assent in one case, and Approbation in the other, are equally and irresistably gained; only there is this Difference, that the Will has Power to rebel, and the Understanding has not. But whenever the Will does rebel, the immediate Consequence is an odious Perception of Wrong, and a Consciousness of Guilt, which may be looked upon as natural Sanctions of the Law of Nature.

6. REASON, or *Intelligence*, is a Faculty enabling us to perceive, either immediately or mediately, the Agreement or Disagreement of Ideas, whether natural or moral. — This last Cause, otherwise superfluous, is inserted upon our Author's Account; who seems to exclude *moral Ideas*, and to consider them as Objects of another Faculty. And indeed, if he had thought our Understandings capable of moral Perceptions he would have had no Occasion for introducing his *moral Sense*, except in Relation to the το καλόν, concerning which, I have already acknowledged myself undetermined. But it is visible, that he ascribes our Perceptions of the Rectitude of virtuous Actions to this *moral Sense*, or rather makes that Rectitude entirely consist in their Correspondence with it. Whereas if there be a real Rectitude in such Actions, I cannot doubt but our Understandings are capable of perceiving it. We have confessedly Ideas of Actions and Agents, and find a manifest Difference among them. We find likewise that

that some Actions are agreeable, others disagreeable, to the Nature and Circumstances of the Agent and the Object, and the Relations interceding between them. Thus for Instance, we find an Agreement between the Gratitude of *A* and the Kindness of *B*, and a Disagreement between the Ingratitude of *C* and the Bounty of *D*. These Agreements and Disagreements are visible to every intelligent Observer, who attends to the several Ideas. The Question then is, whether we perceive them by our *Understanding*, or by what our Author calls a *moral Sense*? And might it not as well be asked, how it is that we perceive the Agreement between the three Angles of a Triangle, and two right ones? Will our Author say, that we perceive this by an *Intellectual Sense* superadded to our Understanding? I believe he will not. Why then does he ascribe the other Perceptions to a *moral* one? If * the Agreement or Disagreement of one Sort of Ideas be proper Objects of our Understandings, why not those of another? Especially since, in many cases, they are perceived with equal Clearness and Evidence. Let therefore our intelligent Faculty either be pronounced insufficient in both cases, or in neither. Nay, since moral Perceptions are more useful and important than any other, there is peculiar Reason to conclude, that they belong

* *Nam ut vera & falsa sua sponte, non aliena, judicantur; sic constans & perpetua ratio vite, quæ est virtus—sua natura probatur.* Cic. de Leg. Lib. 1.

to our supreme Faculty. It is not to be imagined, that the wise Author of Nature would frame our Minds in such a Manner, as to allot them only *Instincts* for the Purposes of Morality and Virtue, and at the same Time grant them *Reason* and Intelligence for inferior Uses. This seems to me neither consistent with the Dignity of Virtue, nor the Supremacy of our rational Faculty.

7. TRUTH, objectively consider'd, is either of *Words, Ideas, or Things*. By which last I mean external Natures. VERBAL Truth, or the Truth of Propositions is their Conformity to one or both of the other two. IDEAL Truth is the Agreement or Disagreement of Ideas. Truth of THINGS is the relative Nature of Things themselves, or the Agreement or Disagreement of one thing with another. — That Ideas correspond or differ, agree or disagree with each other, will readily be allowed, whether such Agreements or Disagreements be formed into Propositions or no. The Differences among them constitute various Relations, which are fixed and certain, independently of our Observation. — In like manner *external Natures*, in virtue of their essential or circumstantial Differences, abound in real Relations to one another, independently of Propositions, and in some sense, even of Ideas. The Things indeed themselves could never have existed without a Mind, and antecedent Ideas. But when they are once brought into Existence, and constituted in such or such a Manner, those Agreements

ments or Disagreements, wherein Truth consists, flow necessarily from their respective Constitutions; and by Consequence, neither depend on the Perceptions of intelligent Beings, nor on the Will of the Creator himself. A cylindrical Body would be bigger than a conical one, of the same Base and Height, and spherical Particles fitter for Motion than angular, whether any Beings perceiv'd it, or no. — There are also the same real Agreements and Disagreements between Actions, Agents, and Objects, as any other Things. Some Actions are very different from, and even contrary to others. There is likewise a wide Difference between the Nature of rational Creatures, and that of Brutes; and between the Nature of Brutes, and that of inanimate Things. They require therefore respectively a suitable Treatment. To treat *Men* in the same Way we treat *Brutes*, and to treat *Brutes* in the same Way we do *Stocks* and *Stones*, is manifestly as disagreeable and dissonant to the Natures of Things, as it would be to attempt the forming of an Angle with two parallel Lines. I would not call such a Conduct *acting a Lye*, because that is confounding objective and subjective Truth, and introducing needless Perplexities. I would not call it a *Contradiction* to some true *Proposition*, because that neither comes up to the Case, nor is a Way of speaking strictly proper; but I would call it a *Counter-action to the Truth, or real Natures of Things*. — From hence it appears, how far, and with what Propriety a

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morally good Action may be said to be *conformable to Truth*, or to *consist in such a Conformity*. If by Truth be meant the *Truth of Things*, then I think it may properly be said, that the moral Goodness of an Action consists in a Conformity thereto. It may therefore be called either a *true* or a *right* Action; tho' for Distinction sake, and the avoiding of Ambiguity and Confusion, I should constantly prefer the latter. However, since this *Truth of Things* is, in *Morals*, the Standard and Measure of *true Propositions*, which are no otherwise true, than as they agree with it; it is evidently more proper to represent moral Goodness as founded on the former, rather than the latter. — If it be asked, why it is not as proper to found it on *ideal Truth*, as the *Truth of Things*? I answer, that in respect of *divine Ideas* it is the very same, all Things being created and framed according to those Models. But tho' external Natures are only *Copies* of the divine Ideas, yet in respect of ours they are *Originals*, since our Ideas are all taken from them, as far as Morality is concerned. It is true, indeed, in *Mathematicks* our Ideas themselves are the Standards, Nature supplying no Figures so exact as that Science requires: But in *Morals* our Ideas are only Representations of Natures and Relations actually existing. As far as our Ideas are conformable thereto, so far they are just; but we cannot in all Instances be absolutely secure that they are so. In some nicer Cases we may misapprehend the States and Circumstances

stances of moral Agents, and the Relations between them. In Strictness therefore, the Foundations of Morality must be laid either in the Truth or Nature of Things themselves, or in the divine Ideas, which comes to the same Thing.

Nevertheless, in ordinary Cases, we may securely rely on our own Perceptions, the Objects of which, even in Morals, are often self-evident Truths, and almost always resolvable into such. The Reasons of Things, and the Relations between moral Agents, seldom fail of appearing to us in a clear Light; and that, as I before observed, without the Help of an additional Faculty. For the most Part we perceive and *understand* what is *right*, and what is *wrong* in *Actions*, as plainly and distinctly as we understand what is *true*, and what is *false* in *Propositions*; and both consist in the Relations discoverable between our Ideas; so that we have all the Grounds that can be, to conclude them equally Objects of *Intelligence*. — To give Pain, without Cause, to a sensible Creature, is an Action self-evidently *wrong*, as being directly repugnant to the Nature of the Object, and the Circumstances of the Agent: The Iniquity of it is as manifest to every Understanding, as the Difference between a curve and a straight Line. We are certainly informed by our Senses, that *Pain* is a natural *Evil*; here is therefore a plain and perpetual Reason against the Infliction of it, when no stronger intervenes to make it requisite. — In like Manner we certainly know that *Pleasure* is a natural *Good*; here is therefore a plain and

perpetual Reason for the Production of it, whenever we have it in our Power, and are not hinder'd by a stronger. — Are then these Things, strictly speaking, *unintelligible*? Is it entirely owing to one Instinct, that we are guided by such Rules, and to another that we approve of them? Upon the whole, if we really have such a Faculty as Understanding, and its proper Object be Truth, we need not doubt but it is capable of discerning moral Rectitude, since this is entirely founded upon Truth, and ultimately consists in an Agreement with it.

If it be objected to this Account of Virtue, that so small a Regard is had in it to *Affections* and *Temper*; my Answer is, that tho' I grant the Reality of such Affections, and the *Usefulness* of them, in respect of human Nature, yet I can by no means look upon them as *essential* to Virtue; nor can I think that any *Instinct* has a Place in its Constitution. To speak properly, Reason was not given us to regulate natural Affection, but natural Affection was given us to reinforce Reason, and make it more prevalent. The inferior Principle must be intended as subservient to the Superior, and not *vice versa*. Let Affection be allowed, if you will, antecedent in Order of Time; I neither know nor enquire how far in Point of Use and Exercise it may get the start of Reason and Reflection: This will neither give it Pre-eminence, nor make it equal in Dignity; Sense and Memory are prior to the Use of Judgment, but still are inferior Principles. — A benevolent Instinct is a very
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proper Introduction to Virtue; It may lead us, as it were, by the Hand, 'till we arrive at a Conduct truly virtuous, and that is founded on rational Principles; and even afterwards it may continue to quicken us in our Pursuits. But yet, as far as our Wills are determined, either by Instinct, or any Thing else besides Reason, so far, I think, we can have no Pretension to Merit or moral Goodness. However, as Instinct has a Tendency to moral Good, so it actually produces a great Share of natural Good. Doubtless a great Porportion of the Benefits and good Offices that are done in the World, are to be ascribed to natural Affection, either wholly or chiefly. And tho' this be no Proof of the Prevalence of true Virtue among Mankind, but rather an Argument of the contrary; yet most certainly it is a signal Instance of the Wisdom and Goodness of the Creator, in providing such a wonderful Supply both for our natural Wants and our moral Defects. — But other and larger Concessions are to be made in behalf of *Affection*, tho' of a different Kind from that of *Instinct*.

It seems to me an useful and material Distinction, to consider the *Affection of Benevolence*, either as *instinctive*, or as *rational*, as natural, or as acquired; acquired I mean by Reason, Reflection, and a consequent Practice. If we attend to the Reasons on which moral Goodness is founded, we discover its Rectitude and intrinsic Fitness. Why then may not this very Perception produce benevolent Affection, or a real Desire of public Good? And this Desire continue
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prompting Men to generous Pursuits, and be strengthened by suitable Practice? Is not such a *rational Benevolence* more agreeable to rational Natures, and more meritorious than a blind *Instinct* that we have in common with inferior Creatures, and which operates, as it were, mechanically, both on their Minds and ours? I have already granted that we could not, without great Inconvenience, have wanted such an Impulse, and that great and good Effects are produced by it. I have also granted, that a natural Bias proper to draw us into the right Path, and to prevent our being led astray, during the Infancy of our Reason; but still I must maintain, that this Impulse or Bias is not Virtue; nor can any Thing be Virtue, but what consists in a rational Determination of the Mind. As our Fellow-Creatures are a proper Object of a *natural* Affection, so are they a proper Object of a *rational* one; and as *that* is good and useful, *this* is laudable and truly virtuous. — It cannot, I think, be denied, but that *calm universal Benevolence*, in Praise and Preference of which our Author often speaks, is more owing to Reason and Reflexion, than natural Instinct, where-ever it appears. And supposing us naturally void of publick Affection, I doubt not but Reason and Reflexion would raise such a Benevolence as this, in considerate Minds. — I shall only add, that tho' an *Instinctive* and a *rational* Benevolence may make the same amiable Appearance in the Eyes of Men, who cannot indeed distinguish them in any Minds but their own; yet in the Sight of the Deity, I doubt

doubt not but the latter is much more acceptable and meritorious.

Again, if Virtue must be derived from some *Affection*, why not that *Affection*, of which *Reason* itself is the *Object*? And here again, I mean no *Instinctive Determination* of the Mind. As I spoke before of a *rational Benevolence*, of which Mankind is the *Object*, so here I speak of a *rational Love of Complacency*, the *Object* of which is Reason or moral Goodness itself. Whatever is good, absolutely good, will produce the *Affection* either of Complacency or * *Desire*, in such Beings as are capable and willing to attend to its Excellence. Virtue† then, or moral Rectitude, being good in this Sense, will not fail to recommend itself to all rational Minds that duly consider it. The *Congruity* between the *Object* and the *Faculty* is not arbitrary, as in other Cases, but necessary and unchangeable. — As to the *Beauty* of Virtue, that is a further Charm, as the *Pleasure* attending the Perception of it is an additional Recommendation. Whether these, especially the latter of them, belong not to some other Faculty than that of Intelligence, I leave to be enquired and determined by others: What I contend for at present is, that without regarding, or thinking of the *Pleasure* it may yield, we esteem Virtue

* *Omne honestum sua sponte est expetendum.* Cic. de Leg. l. 1.

† *Qua si oculis cerneretur, mirabiles amores excitaret sui.*

Id. de Off. Lib. 1.

Placet suapte Natura — Virtus. Sen. de Benef. Lib. 4.

or moral Rectitude upon its own Account; that our *Affection* for it, is not an *instinctive* Determination, but raised and produced in the Mind, by the intrinsic Worth and Goodness of the Object. Most other Objects are therefore good, because they are adapted to our Faculties, or our Faculties to them. But *Truth* and *Virtue* are good in themselves, and necessarily appear so to all Beings capable of perceiving them: Their Excellence is not borrowed or adventitious, but inherent and essential: They reflect not a foreign Light, but shine like the Sun, with their own proper Rays and native Lustre.

Our Author in his * *Nature and Conduct of the Passions*, makes mention of a *Rational Desire*; and takes Notice of *such Affections as seem to arise necessarily from a rational Apprehension of Good or Evil*. I cannot avoid thinking, that he would have done more Justice both to Virtue and human Nature, if he had laid more Stress upon such Affections as these, and less upon Instincts. He † grants (speaking of Virtue) that *the lovely Form never fails to raise Desire, as soon as it appears*. But this *Desire*, according to his Notion, is only an *instinctive Affection*, suited and accommodated to its Object. And even this Object, *Virtue* itself, which he calls a *lovely Form*, appears, I think, in *his* Representation, far less lovely than it really is. For he has represented this Love-

* Page 62, 46.

† Ibid. Page 103.

linefs, not as absolute and necessarily inherent, but as factitious and communicated. According to him, suppose but the *moral Sense* inverted, and then *Vice*, as we now call it, becomes the *lovely Form*. But surely this is a Misrepresentation of Virtue, the Excellence of which is not precarious nor derived, but essential, absolute, and independant.

But to return; the *Rational Affections* before-mentioned, springing from so noble a Principle, and operating jointly upon the Mind, along with natural Propensity, must needs constitute an excellent *Disposition*. The best and most desirable *Temper* in the World, must, I think, be that which consists in a *Rational universal Benevolence*, and an habitual *Complacency in Virtue*. Whether such Affections be considered as grafted upon natural Benevolence, or as distinct Principles co-operating with it; I venture to affirm, that the more any *Temper* is influenced by Reason and Reflexion, the better and nobler Effects it will produce, and render the Possessor more amiable and more deserving.

But the great Difficulty in our Author's Apprehension, is yet behind: He wants to be informed what are the Motives, Inducements, or *exciting Reasons* for the *Choice* of Virtue, and what the *justifying Reasons* of our *Approbation* of it. He seems to think these Questions are not to be answered upon the Scheme I am defending: Let us then try whether this Difficulty be not surmountable without the Help of those *Instincts* which he has introduced for that purpose.

pose.——What is the *Reason* exciting a Man to the *Choice* of a virtuous Action? I answer, his very *Approbation* of it, is itself a *sufficient Reason*, wherever it is not over-ruled by another more powerful. What can be more just, what more natural, than *choosing* of a Thing that we *approve*, and even choosing it for that very Reason? — But why then do we *approve*? or what *justifies* our *Approbation* of it? I answer in a one Word, *Necessity*. The same Necessity which compels Men to *assent* to what is *true*, forces them to approve what is *right* and fit. And I cannot but wonder, that our Author should demand a Reason for the one more than for the other. In both Cases the Mind necessarily acquiesces, without regarding or considering the Effects or Tendencies of either.

If it be needful to enlarge upon this Matter, or take a further View of it, we need only call to mind what was before observed, *viz.* That Virtue being intrinsically worthy and excellent, fails not to produce a real *Affection* for itself, in all Minds that attentively consider it; it not only makes itself *approved*, but *admired*; not only *admired* but *loved*, by those that contemplate it in a proper Manner: And the better any one is acquainted with it by Contemplation and Practice, the more amiable it becomes, and the higher his Affection rises. Is it then to be wonder'd, that rational Beings should *choose* what they *love*, or in other Words, embrace an *Object* of their *Affections*? Much less is it to be wonder'd in the present Case, where the
peculiar

peculiar Dignity and Excellence of the Object is confessed. — Our Author grants that * *all Affections justify themselves*: What can this mean, but that they *justify* our *Approbation* and *Choice* of their respective Objects? If therefore it be true that we have, or may have, such an *Affection for Virtue* or moral Goodness, as I have been speaking of, we shall need to seek no further, either for *Excitements to Election*, or Grounds of Approbation. Whether this *Affection* be looked upon as *natural* or *adventitious*, it will abundantly justify itself, and all the Regards that may be shewn for its Object.

But our Author tells us *, that *in every calm rational Action, some END is desired or intended*. And accordingly he expects to hear, what is the *End* which a Man proposes in the *Choice of Virtue*, upon the present Scheme. He affirms that *under Benevolence, Self-love, and their Opposites, all Affections are included*; and concludes from thence, that there can be *no exciting Reason* but what arises from some or other of them. — Before I examine this Objection, I desire to know whether that *Esteem, Admiration, Complacency* which Virtue produces, be no *Affection*; and whatever they may be called, whether they may not *excite to Election*? Is Virtue no otherwise good or amiable, than as it conduces to public or private Advantage? Is there no *absolute Goodness* in it? Are all its

† Vol. I. Page 152.

* Vol. II. Page 216.

Perfections *relative* and instrumental? Have we no other Idea of the *Honestum* and the *Pulchrum* but this? Is the *lovely Form* to be consider'd only as a Kind of *Cornucopia*?

But to return, our Author's Question amounts plainly to this: What does a *reasonable* Creature propose in *acting reasonably*? Or what is it that induces his *Will* to take Counsel of his *Understanding*? As if this were not the very Essence of a rational Action! The Question therefore might as well have been put thus; What is it that induces a Man to be a rational Agent, when he has it in his Power to be otherwise? Besides the *internal Reasons* which I am speaking of, there are indeed likewise *external Reasons*, if Considerations of Interest may properly be called so. Call them what we will, they must and will be regarded by such Creatures as Men. But clamorous and importunate as they are, they leave us at liberty, in most Cases, to attend to those *internal Reasons* which I have been considering. The *still Voice* of Conscience may generally be heard amidst all the Bustle and Tumult of our Appetites and Passions. — But to come to the Point, if by the *End* which our Author enquires after, he means nothing but some Advantage or *natural Good*; my Answer is, that we may chuse reasonable or virtuous Actions, without Intention or View of any such *End*. But if I may be allowed to take the Word in another Signification, then I answer as follows. — The *End* of rational Actions and rational Agents, consider'd as such, is *Reason* or
moral

moral Good. As this is the proper *Object* of our *moral Capacity*, and the *Affection* corresponding thereto, it may properly be said to be our *End* as *moral Agents*. This *Affection*, like others, reaches out to its proper *Object*, and rests in the Possession of it, as its true *End*, whether it be, or be not connected with Happiness. The End of the Speculatist is *Truth*, whether it redound to his Advantage, or his Disadvantage. The End of the Moralist is *Rectitude*, whether it conduce to his Interest or no. Considered as * *moral*, this is precisely the Mark that he aims at; his Judgment directing, and his Affection prompting to this *Object*, as in a peculiar Sense, self-worthy and self-eligible. In short, *moral Good* is an *End*, an *ultimate End* of one Kind, as *natural Good* is of another. And these Ends are so closely united and interwoven, that it is sometimes difficult to separate them even in our Conceptions. In the pursuit of *Pleasure*, we have often the Consent and Concurrence of *Reason*; and when we pursue *Reason* or *Virtue*, *Pleasure* accompanies and follows. If we propose to make ourselves happy, we have Reason on our Side; and if we determine to act reasonably, *Pleasure* is the Consequence. — Nevertheless, they are, in themselves, distinct Objects, and distinct Ends. However *Pleasure* may be the Consequence or Appendage of *Virtue*, yet strictly speaking, it is not the *End* of a moral

* Μηδὲν ἄλλω προσέχων ἢ τὸ λόγον. Epictet. ibid.

Agent, nor the *Object* of a Moral Affection, but *Virtue* alone, antecedent to all Considerations, and abstracted from every natural Good. As Man is a *sensible* Creature, as well as *moral*, I deny not but certain Circumstances may be supposed, wherein, these *Ends* interfering, the *moral* Good would certainly be postponed to the *natural*, and the *external Reasons* unavoidably prevail over the *internal*: But such Cases can never come into Fact, and therefore need not be regarded. As God has framed our Natures in such a Manner, as makes it necessary for us to approve and pursue both these *Ends*, we may infallibly conclude, that he does not intend to suffer them finally to interfere.

If our Author denies that any *Affection* can have such an *Object*, or such an *End*, as is not advantageous or *naturally good*, I must refer him to an Observation of his own. He himself produces * a remarkable Instance of an *Affection* continuing in pursuit of its *Object*, when known to be utterly useless and incapable of contributing in any Degree to the Advantage of the Pursuer. The *Object* I speak of is *future Fame*, which he supposes would be desired even at the Point of Annihilation. Should he here be asked for an *exciting Reason*, he would answer *Affection*; or for a *justifying Reason*, he would still answer *Affection*; all *Affections justifying themselves*. I wish then, he would tell why abstract-

* Vol. II. Page 24.

ing all other Motives, *Affection* may not excite us to chuse *Virtue* as well as *Fame*; and at least equally justify the Choice. — By the *absolute Fitness* of *Virtue*, which appears so unintelligible to our Author, no more is meant, than that * *inherent Goodness*, that *Self-Worth*, which renders it fit to be chosen, pursued, practised, loved by every rational Being. As *Truth* is *absolutely fit* to be assented to; so *Virtue*, which is founded on *Truth* is *absolutely fit* to be approved and practised.

I would further observe, that *Virtue*, in this View, is no less *disinterested*, than in that of our Author's. As he does not allow that the Pleasure which attends *benevolent Actions*, makes them interested, because the Agent is not excited or influenced by it; so neither can I allow that the *Love of Virtue* is interested, whatever Pleasure it may be attended with; forasmuch as Pleasure is no more the Motive or Excitement in this Case, than in the other. — Both *Public Affection*, and the *Love of Virtue*, gratify the Mind; but the Mind does not, or at least needs not intend its own Gratification in either. Tho' they be Affections of a different Kind, yet they are, or may be equally generous and disinterested. Whatever Pleasure *Virtue* may give in the Contemplation or Practice, that Pleasure is not the chief or primary Reason of our Approba-

* Nam est quiddam quod sua vi nos alliciat ad sese, non emolumento captans aliquo, sed trahens sua dignitate; quod genus, virtus, scientia, veritas est. Cic. de Invent.

tion and Esteem. We approve and esteem it for its own intrinsic Worth, antecedently to every other Consideration. — I shall only observe further, that as in Fact, we often pursue speculative Truths without so much as thinking of any Interest, and when we have found them, acquiesce in them: So* good Men often propose and undertake good Actions, without thinking of any Advantage or Pleasure at all. And when the Actions are social and directed to public Interest, yet still the Love of Reason and moral Rectitude is often the leading Principle. The Agents are beneficent and kind, in obedience to the Dictates of *Reason*.

While we act up to the Character of rational Agents, we shall be sure to follow *Reason*, whether it call us out in quest of public or private Good. *Reason* is the perpetual Arbitress of our several Claims and Pretensions, will inform us what we are to do for others, and what for ourselves; prevent the interfering of public and private Interest, and adjust all imaginary Differences and Competitions between them. *Reason* may be considered as Paramount and Superior to ever Interest, even that of the Public, however it may decide in favour thereof. It would be improper and absurd to say, that we hearken to Reason for the Sake of our Fellow-Creatures, but it is very just and proper to

* *Optimi quique permulta ob eam unam Causam faciunt, quia decet, quia rectum, quia honestum est: etsi nullum consecuturum emolumentum vident.* Cic. de Fin. Lib. 1.

say that we oblige and serve our Fellow-Creatures, because Reason requires it. Reason both enjoins the Duty, and prescribes the Measures of it.

It is manifest that Reason has placed every private Interest in Subordination to public; and if Cases may be imagined, where this Order is inverted, it is certain that such Cases can never actually happen, and therefore it is needless to take Notice of them. Were the World without a *Governor*, or without a Governor of infinite Wisdom and Perfection, the Nature and Circumstances of Mankind would be a Scene of mere Disorder and Confusion. They would be frequently distracted between opposite and contradictory Obligations. Since we are *sensible* as well as *rational* Creatures, Reason alone can never be *self-sufficient*, tho' it may be, and is *self-eligible*. Exclude the Belief of Providence and a future State, and in many Cases it must be owned, Virtue would not be able to support itself. Adversity and great Misery would make Men deaf to the Dictates of their own Minds; would bring them down, as it were, from Reason to Sense; as the extreme Anguish and Torture of some Distempers have forced Men to quit their erect Posture, and crawl upon the Ground.

But tho' this be a strong Argument for a future State, it is none against the Dignity of Virtue, or the Supremacy of a rational Principle. There can never be in Fact, a Necessity for opposing this, or departing from it; what-

ever there may be in Supposition or Speculation: However therefore Men may happen to counter-act their present Interest, it is unquestionably their Duty to follow wherever Reason and Virtue lead them. He who formed them reasonable Creatures, and thereby unavoidably subjected them to the Dictates of Reason, will assuredly take Care that they be not finally Sufferers by their Adherence thereto. He will make abundant Compensation for every Loss, and every Disadvantage hereby occasioned. To imagine otherwise, is, in effect, to suppose Inconsistency and Contrariety in the very Frame of our Nature.

I know not whether I need to observe, that our Author ever seems to take it for granted there is no *absolute* Good but *natural* Good; and that *moral* Good is no otherwise such, than as it is subservient and conducive to *natural* Good. On the contrary, I affirm and maintain, that tho' *moral* Good greatly promotes *natural* Good, it is moreover in itself an *absolute* Good. What Proof can we give of the *absolute* Goodness of *Pleasure*, but that we approve of it, upon its own Account, and pursue it for its own sake? The same Proof we have of the *absolute* Goodness of *Virtue*, which considered by itself, and abstract from every other Thing, necessarily extorts our Approbation, and appears worthy of our Choice. Our approving and admiring it antecedently to those Satisfaction which flow from it, is an undeniable Proof of its absolute
and

that * *no Reason can excite to Action previously to some End.* To which I answer, that if *Reason* or *Virtue* were not itself an *End* to a Moral Agent, in the Manner explain'd above; it would still follow, that there might be a *Reason exciting to Action* without an *End*. Our *Approbation* of *Virtue*, and *Affection* for it, would certainly be *such a Reason*. That which is necessarily *approved* and *beloved* upon its own Account, may undoubtedly be chosen without any additional Motive. Though our Approbation of *Virtue* be necessary, yet that Necessity is only a Consequence of the intrinsic Goodness and Excellence of *Virtue*. *Virtue* is therefore worthy of that Approbation which it gains; and if worthy of our Approbation, why not of our Choice? Why should not that Worth which makes us necessarily approve of it in Speculation, recommend it to our Practice? Why should we not freely conform our *Actions* to our *Judgments*? If we plainly perceive that a Thing is *right* and *fit* to be done, and yet refuse to do it without further *Excitements*, do we not justly incur the double Imputation of Unreasonableness and Interestedness? If *external Reasons* be wanting, here is a strong *internal one*: a Compliance with which is, if I mistake not, the most perfect and most disinterested *Virtue*. I humbly presume the Goodness of the Deity himself proceeds from this Principle, and rests

* Vol. II. Page 286, and elsewhere.

upon this Foundation. A perpetual Regard and Attachment to the *internal Reasons* of Things is the utmost Perfection of a Moral Agent. Whether our Author will allow them to be an *End*, or *Excitements* without an End, must be left to his own Determination. But I think he must necessarily allow either the one or the other.

He adds, that *no End can be proposed without some Instinct or Affection*. To which I answer, that it has been already acknowledged, that Moral Agents have and must have an *Affection* for Virtue. But why must this *Affection* be an *Instinct*? Whatever Reasons there may be for an *instinctive Benevolence*, I can see none for an *instinctive Love of Virtue*. An Object that is and appears *Self-good*, or intrinsically excellent, must necessarily produce *Esteem* and *Admiration* in all Minds capable of perceiving it. We find our Minds necessarily *determined* in Favour of Virtue. But I presume such a *Determination* is not antecedent, but consequent to our Perceptions of this amiable Object. Even the *Desire of natural Good* seems to be in Reality no *Instinct*, though commonly called and reputed such. Our Affections indeed for particular Objects are manifestly *instinctive*, as it was requisite they should; but I see no Need of supposing a *previous Determination* of the Mind either to *natural Good* in general, or to *Moral*. As soon as either comes to be perceived, it necessarily determines the Mind towards itself. But this *Determination*
being

being consequent to Perception, is, if I mistake not, improperly called *Instinct*. It is indeed *Affection*, but that Affection, I suppose, is produced in the Mind, not antecedently planted in it.

Our Author observes *, that if by *determining ourselves freely*, we mean *acting, without any Motive or exciting Reason, by mere Election*; such kind of Action can never gain any one's *Approbation*. Now I readily grant there is no Merit in *acting without any Motive or Reason*. On the other hand, it may be affirmed that neither is there any Merit in *Actions* to which an Agent is driven by natural *Instinct*. The one of these is a worthless Use of Freedom, the other no Freedom at all. In the former Case the Man acts, but to no Purpose. In the latter he does not act, but is acted upon. Or however he is passive in Proportion to the Influence and Operation of the *Instinct*. But *determining ourselves freely* to act and to do what appears conformable to *Reason*, is making the best Use of both Faculties that we possibly can. And if there be no Merit in such a Conduct, we are capable of none. It is no Diminution of this Merit, that Virtue necessarily engages our Approbation, and attracts our Esteem. If all things were indifferent, and no *Reasons* appeared to incline our Wills one Way more than another, we should have *Liberty* to no Purpose. But surely there is a manifest and

* Vol, II. Page 286,—7.

wide Difference between a *rational Determination*, and a *mere Impulse* of Nature. It is only *Reason*, or the Appearance of Reason, that can *justify* the *Choice* of a Moral Agent; who is no further *Praise-worthy*, than as he acts in Conformity thereto. *Instinctive Goodness* is the *Creator's* Goodness, not the *Creature's*; so far, I mean, as it proceeds from Instinct, and it proceeds from Instinct, and is owing thereto.

Let us suppose two Persons equally producing any given Quantity of Beneficence, or Moment of Good; the one merely from a sweet Disposition, and a high Degree of Good-Nature; the other from Reason, Reflexion, and Resolution, without any such good natural Disposition, or in Opposition to a bad one; do I need to ask whether of these Characters is more meritorious and virtuous? The one steers his Course with the Advantage of a fair Wind, and a strong Tide; the other works his Way through a rough and stormy Sea, with great Care, Industry, and Application. They may appear perhaps equally amiable in the undistinguishing Eye of the World, but far otherwise in the Sight of Heaven.—In short, I cannot have any other Idea of *Moral Merit*, than *conforming*, or endeavouring to conform *our Actions to the Reasons of Things*. And this, I am persuaded, is the real *Foundation* of all *Goodness* whether *human* or *divine*.

Our Author's Reasonings concerning this Matter, being all built on the Principles which I have already considered, it is needless to proceed

ceed to a more particular Examination of them. —Nor shall I trouble the Reader with a Train of Corollaries that might easily be deduced from the foregoing Account. But the two following seeming more material and important than the rest, may deserve, not only to be mentioned, but set forth particularly, and at large.

The one is, that *Virtue* may be *taught*, or promoted by Instruction; in Opposition to our Author, who * denies it: Agreeably enough, I I confess, to his own Principles, which naturally lead him to such a Conclusion. For if *Virtue* consists in an *Instinct*, and the Effects of that Instinct, it is evident that Instruction can avail little or nothing. But if, according to the foregoing Account, *Virtue* consist in the *Conformity* of Men's Actions to the *Reasons of Things*; the Advantage of Moral Instruction must be very manifest. For hereby the Ignorant may be assisted in discovering and perceiving, which Actions are conformable, and which repugnant to the Nature and Circumstances of Agents, and the Relations thence arising. In ordinary Cases the Difference between *Right* and *Wrong* is so evident and notorious, that the most ignorant perceive it without Instruction. And yet even in these Cases, it may be very useful, as it is very practicable, to shew more particularly and distinctly, the Reasonableness, the Fitness, and the Excellence of a virtuous Practice; and the Unreasonableness and

* Vol. II. Page 276, and elsewhere.

Unfitness, the Odiousness and Baseness, of a vicious Conduct. By these and other Topicks, properly insisted on, Men may acquire a Veneration for Virtue, and an Abhorrence of Vice. Good Dispositions may be raised or cherished in their Minds, and evil ones checked or rooted out.—And in respect of other Duties not self-evident, their Connexion with such as are, may be discovered and laid open; or they may be unfolded and resolved into simple Truths, and self-evident Propositions.—And as the Ignorant may thus learn what their several Duties are, so they may be induced and prevailed upon to comply with them, not only by external Motives, but by internal Reasons drawn from the Nature of Morality and Virtue. And surely it must turn to some Account, and tend to inspire Men with right Sentiments and virtuous Purposes, to convince them how reasonable it is to do well, and how unreasonable to do ill. Such Instruction must be useful to the Ignorant, and may contribute to reclaim the Vicious. It doubtless tends to produce such an Effect. However it must, I think, be allowed, that since Men are reasonable Creatures, and Virtue the most reasonable Thing in the World; there can be no Impossibility of reconciling, by Reason and Argument, the one to the other, Virtue therefore may be promoted by Instruction; or in other Words, may be *properly taught*.

I cannot but observe, that * *amiable Concep-*

* Vol. II. Page 89, and elsewhere.

tions of our Fellow-Creitures are represented by our Author as necessary for the producing of Benevolence. † *Moral Goodness* must be discovered in them, in order to *raise* our *Love*. But does he not confound the Affections of *Benevolence* and *Complacency*? Whether our *Fellow-Creatures* be amiable or unamiable, deserving or undeserving, they are *sensible*; and as such, Objects of our *Benevolence*. Their very *Sensibility* is their Title, which holds good where there is nothing else to be pleaded in their Behalf.—Here then is an Instance of the Benefit and Usefulness of Instruction. Men are too apt to imagine that the Worthless and the Wicked have no Claim to their Regard. But they may be informed and convinced, that such Objects have a Claim to their Benevolence, and can never forfeit it, till they become *insensible*.

The other Consequence of the foregoing Account is, that there may be real Virtue in such Actions as respect the Agent himself, and are directed to his own Advantage. If Virtue consist in *acting conformably to Reason*, and if *Reason* not only allows, but requires the Agent (as it certainly does) to regard his own Good, in Subordination to that of the Public; it must needs follow that such a Conduct is, or may be virtuous. On the contrary, our Author does not allow such Actions to be virtuous, any otherwise than as they conduce to Public Good,

and are directed thereto. Thus † *Temperance* for Instance, he grants to be laudable and virtuous under the foresaid Reference, but not otherwise. In no other Respect will he allow it to be *morally good*, however *naturally good*, or *advantageous to Health*.

But I presume there is other Merit besides this, in the Discharge of what we may call Self-duties. Were any Man supposed *alone*, without any *Fellow-Creatures* in the Universe; would there be no Merit, no *Moral Goodness*, in the highest Improvement of his Faculties, and the exactest Government of his Appetites and Inclinations? Though he conformed all his Actions to the Rules of right Reason; checking every Desire, and denying himself every Gratification inconsistent therewith; would there be nothing laudable, nothing meritorious in such a Conduct as this? On the Contrary, would it not be very acceptable to the Deity, and procure the Man his Approbation and Favour? Why then, and upon what account would it be thus acceptable? I suppose it will be answered, as the Man was hereby better fitted for the Discharge of those Duties which were owing to his Maker. But surely it must be granted, that his Maker would be incapable of receiving the least Benefit from such a Conduct. What Advantage therefore, or *natural Good* the Man proposed, must terminate in himself, and be directed accordingly. But prior to this View must

be supposed his Regard to *Moral Good*. Those Acts of Praise, Adoration, and Thanksgiving which were offered by him to the Creator, must primarily and immediately flow from a Regard to *the intrinsic Reason and Rectitude* of the Thing, which is *Moral Good*; and secondarily (as Reason permits and prescribes) to his *own Advantage*, or *Natural Good*; which indeed would be all the natural Good that he could have in view. Such a Homage and such a Deference paid to that *sacred Law of eternal Truth and Rectitude*, which obliges even the Deity himself, and whose *Will* therefore it must be; is the truest Glory that can be given by a Creature to the Creator. It may be looked upon not only as a Submission to the *Divine Will*, but as a Conformity to the *Divine Understanding*; on the Agreement of which is founded that Goodness which is infinitely perfect.

But to return to the Supposition of the solitary Agent; if he only aimed at that *Self-good* to which *Reason* directed, and pursued it by the most reasonable and laudable Means; what could be wanting to denominate and constitute such a Behaviour truly virtuous? If neglecting the Care and Culture of his Mind, he gave himself up to sensual Pleasure, and subjected his Reason to his Appetites; as he must renounce all Pretension to Virtue, so he would grossly neglect his own Interest. But as he is supposed to take a quite contrary Method; he must either be reputed virtuous, or pronounced incapable of Virtue. — And as a due Performance of the Self-

Self-duties would be laudable and virtuous upon such a Supposition, so is it without the Supposition, though differently circumstanced. The Coexistence of innumerable Fellow-Creatures makes Room for other Duties, and another kind of Virtue; but does not cancel the Obligation we are speaking of, nor extinguish the Merit and moral Rectitude of such Actions as respect ourselves.

The primary Dictate of *Right Reason* is, that every Moral Agent *intend the Good of the Whole, or aim at universal Good*. In this universal Good the private Good of every Individual is included. From hence it follows, that if any Agent in the View and Pursuit of common Good, could be supposed to exclude his own; such an Intention and such a Conduct would be less virtuous than if he had included it. It must therefore be granted, that for any Man to aim at his own Welfare, in Subordination to that of the Publick, is not only innocent, but morally good. — But though such Self-views as these are perfectly *right* and *reasonable* in themselves; yet the Question is, how they are affected by the Circumstances of the Agent. Though it be at least as reasonable to consult his own Good, as that of any other Individual; yet it must be allowed that a good Office done to another appears generally more amiable, and even more virtuous, than a like Kindness done to himself. How then comes it to pass that *Social* and *Self-kindness* make such a different Appearance? Is there some peculiar Grace and Beauty super-added

added to our Perceptions of the former, by an *internal Sense* implanted in our Minds for that Purpose.

However that be, the foresaid Difference is easily accounted for. Our *Self-affections* are so much stronger than *natural Benevolence*, and our *private Instincts* than *public* ones; that the Regard shewn, and the Good done to ourselves appear in a great Measure *necessary*. Considered in this Light they must needs seem less amiable, and less meritorious than Actions done merely, or chiefly, *in Conformity to Reason*. What I observed before of *parental Kindness*, may be here applied to *Self-love*; whether it be considered as an *Instinct*, or as a necessary Consequence of experienced Good. But though this Circumstance renders Self-kindness less amiable, and less meritorious; yet it does by no Means set it upon a Level with Actions morally indifferent. And in some Cases it leaves Room for a Conduct highly virtuous.—However useful our *Instincts* may be, when under the Direction of Reason, as Nature designed; yet they are very insufficient Guides, of themselves, for human Nature; and in many Cases would lead Men aside from their true Interest, instead of bringing them to it. Consider them as undirected by Reason, and we shall find that they prompt us to prefer a trivial Enjoyment that is present, to a very great one at a Distance. That they prompt us also to pursue sensual Gratifications to the Neglect of more refined Pleasures, and sublimer Enjoyments. These *Instincts* therefore,
strong

strong and powerful as they are, must be often restrained and resisted by the *Reason* of every Man who pretends to act either virtuously or wisely. In many Cases, instead of gratifying, he must oppose his keenest Appetites, and most urgent Inclinations, by a generous Self-denial. He must curb and keep in his eager Passions, lest instead of being subservient to a higher Principle, they run away with it. On these Accounts there is abundant Room for the Exercise of *Self-virtue*, notwithstanding the Strength and Prevalence of *Self-love*. Accordingly we find that such a Conduct appears not only *reasonable* and *right*, but *beautiful* and *lovely*; and that it is beheld by others with Pleasure, as well as Approbation. To see a Man engaged in a resolute Struggle with a froward Disposition; to see him resisting a clamorous Appetite; or subduing a head-strong Passion; cannot but be agreeable to intelligent Spectators, whether they regard his Actions in relation to Society, or no. And indeed were the Agent *alone* in the World, according to the foregoing Supposition, such a Conduct would still be amiable, still meritorious. Thus, I think, it plainly appears, that aiming at private Welfare is not inconsistent with real Virtue; but when rightly circumstantiated, productive of it.—I shall only add, that the greatest *Self-good* which a Man can possibly propose, is the *perpetual Enjoyment of Virtue*. Such an Aim will be allowed to be virtuous, as the Good aimed at is necessarily connected with public Interest, or the Good of the Whole. And yet

yet it is manifest in this Case, that private Advantage is a real Part of the Object desired. Nevertheless this is so far from lessening the Goodness of the Pursuit, that it increases it, as I before observed. To be influenced in our Conduct by the Prospect of such a *Reward*, can be no Diminution of our present Virtue; but is on the contrary, an Addition to it.

Upon the whole, our End and our Business, as Men and *Moral Agents*, is to pursue *Virtue*, leaving the Consequence to our Maker; who, as he has made us capable of *Truth*, *Virtue*, and *Happiness*, will undoubtedly take Care to make them finally compatible and co-incident. So great is, or will be, the Harmony among them, that they may rather be looked upon as one and the same End, than as distinct and several. The Foundation of *Virtue* is *Truth*, and the Foundation of *Happiness*, *Virtue*.

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